

## Amateur Code Proficiency Requirements

People who must make a serious investment of some form in order to use communications bands are much more likely to use them responsibly than those who make no such investment. The history of the Citizen's Band illustrates that when the cost and complexity of equipment and the requirements for licensing are small enough to make it easy for the average person to get on the air, the investment of time, effort, and money is not high enough to prevent misuse. The CB experience also illustrates that when a large number of people use a communication band, and when the investment is low, enforcement cannot keep up with the level of abuse that occurs. Citizen's Band history also demonstrates that abuse on HF bands, because of their long-range propagation, is a much more serious problem than abuse on HF or VHF bands. In my area, for example, most inappropriate traffic on CB comes from points in Mexico, more than 1000 miles distant.

I believe that we will continue to have usable Amateur bands as long as the investment required to operate on them is high. The equipment cost and the investment in time and in the development of technical know-how will always be high. We should also work to keep the exams meaningfully challenging, as well as relevant. Whether or not code proficiency is kept as a requirement is not as important, I believe, as whether the exams are kept challenging.

Some would suggest keeping code proficiency testing just to keep entry requirements challenging and thus prevent abuse. I do not entirely agree with that point of view. The use of Amateur bands should be encouraged because of the great service rendered by Amateurs during emergencies, and because of the technical know-how the Amateur service encourages. I also believe CW is worth keeping and protecting for its own merits. In manually transcribed emergency communications, CW is just as accurate and time-efficient as phone. In poor signal conditions CW is more reliable than phone, adding to its utility as an emergency communications mode. The simplicity of CW transmitters and receivers makes CW an ideal entry level mode for home-made equipment, thus encouraging Amateurs to gain technical knowledge and proficiency. For many, including myself, CW is simply enjoyable.

My opinion is that it would make sense to continue code proficiency testing for use of Amateur bands allocated to CW, and eliminate CW testing for use of Amateur bands allocated to phone, all the while keeping the exams challenging enough to discourage the irresponsible.